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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Report on the Regional Preparatory Conference on the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for Latin America and The Caribbean

(Concepción, Chile, 12-16 October 1998)

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I. Introduction

A. Background and objectives

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/56 of 10 December 1997, noted that the Government of Chile had offered to host a United Nations regional meeting on space technology and applications for development for Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. The offer from the Government of Chile was made in accordance with the agreement of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its forty-first session, held in 1997, that, as part of its programme of regular activities in 1998 and 1999, the United Nations Programme on Space Applications should organize regional preparatory meetings for the third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III)[1]. The meetings were implemented as regional preparatory conferences for UNISPACE III.

3. The main objective of the Regional Preparatory Conference for UNISPACE III for Latin America and the Caribbean was to provide opportunities for countries from the region to become familiar with the objectives of UNISPACE III, to identify their priority interests in the areas of space science and technology and their applications included in the provisional agenda for UNISPACE III and, within those areas, to formulate recommendations that could be presented for the consideration of the Advisory Committee for UNISPACE III at its 1999 session.

4. The Preparatory Conference established the following general objectives: (a) to promote effective means of using space technology to assist in the solution of problems of regional and global significance; and (b) to strengthen the capabilities of Member States, in particular the developing countries, to apply space technology for economic, social and cultural development.

5. The Preparatory Conference established the following specific objectives: (a) to provide developing countries with opportunities to define their needs for space applications for development purposes in advance of UNISPACE III; (b) to consider ways of expediting the use of space applications by Member States to promote sustainable development, in particular in the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992),[2] through the participation of a greater number of developing countries in international research programmes such as the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme; (c) to address the various issues related to education, training and technical assistance in space science and technology and their application, with a view to developing an indigenous capacity in all States; (d) to provide an adequate forum for a critical evaluation of space activities and to increase awareness among the general public regarding benefits of space technology; and (e) to strengthen international cooperation in space technology and applications.

6. In order to provide Member States of the region with additional opportunities to enhance their preparations for UNISPACE III, the agenda for the Regional Preparatory Conference contained all elements of the provisional agenda for UNISPACE III, as recommended by the Advisory Committee for UNISPACE III at its session in 1997 (A/AC.105/672, annex II, sect. B.3).

B. Organization of the Preparatory Conference

7. The Preparatory Conference was organized from 12 to 16 October 1998 in Concepción, Chile. It was one of the activities of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications that were endorsed in its work programme for 1998 by the General Assembly. The Conference was co-sponsored by the European Space Agency (ESA) and by the Government of Chile.

8. In addition to the United Nations, ESA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, the conference was co-sponsored by the Intendencia de la Región del Biobio and by the University of Concepción. The University hosted the Preparatory Conference at its Central Library and provided secretariat services for it.

9. Funds allocated by the United Nations and by ESA were used to defray the cost of air travel and living expenses for 18 participants. The Government of Chile defrayed the air travel and living expenses of an additional 10 participants.

10. The Preparatory Conference was attended by 170 participants from the following countries, national and international organizations and private industry: Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Honduras, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay; the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Arianespace, the Association of Aerospace Industries (Brazil), the Canadian Space Agency, the Centre national d'études spatiales of France, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, ESA, the Escuela de Agricultura y Recursos de los Trópicos Humidos (Costa Rica), Geoservice Ltda. (Bolivia), the European Southern Observatory, the International Law Association, the Inter-

national Space University, the Latin American Remote Sensing Association (SELPER), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States of America and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations. Representatives of two universities from Argentina, eight universities from Chile, one university from the United States and one university from Uruguay also attended.

C. Programme of the Preparatory Conference

11. The programme of the Preparatory Conference was prepared by the Government of Chile in consultation with Member States of the region.

12. Invitations to participate in the Preparatory Conference were sent by the Government of Chile to all Governments of the region in August 1997. The invitation included a copy of the provisional agenda for UNISPACE III and requested Governments to indicate the items of priority interest to them.

13. In March 1998, representatives of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States met during the session of the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to discuss the objectives and organization of the Preparatory Conference. It was agreed that although the Conference could deal with all items on the provisional agenda for UNISPACE III, the following areas were of priority interest for the region: (a) applications of space technology to mitigate the effects of natural disasters as well as for issuing early warnings and in support of relief operations; (b) use of space applications for preserving the Earth's environment; (c) satellite communications; and (d) space-related education. In June 1998, representatives of the Group met during the session of the Committee and agreed that in addition to the areas identified previously, small satellites and basic space sciences were also of interest to the region.

14. Taking into account the priority areas identified by the region, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and ESA provided technical assistance to the Government of Chile in preparing a proposed schedule of work and distribution of programme items among a plenary and two working groups. The proposed distribution of programme items and schedule of work were transmitted to all Governments of the region in July 1998 along with a note by Chile. The note indicated the priority areas of the Preparatory Conference and described the work procedure and expected results. Governments of the region were also invited to indicate specific technical presentations that they wished to make at the Conference.

15. The programme of the Conference focused on the six priority areas identified by the region, but included all items of the provisional agenda for UNISPACE III. The schedule of work of the plenary and of the two working groups is shown in the annex to the present report.

16. The Preparatory Conference had before it background papers prepared by the Office (A/CONF.184/BP/1-12) and the revised draft report for UNISPACE III (A/CONF.184/PC/1).

D. Proceedings of the Preparatory Conference

17. Opening addresses were made by S. Lavanchy Merino, Rector of the University of Concepción; M. Zilic Hrepic, Governor of the Octava Region; R. González Aninat, Chairman of the Organizing Committee; K. Bergquist, ESA; and S. Camacho, Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The Preparatory Conference was declared open by M. Fernández Amunategui, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile.

18. At its first plenary meeting, the Preparatory Conference adopted the proposed programme and schedule of work and established a plenary and two working groups. The Conference elected its officers as follows: R. González Aninat (Chile), Chairman; C. Rodríguez Brianza (Uruguay) and B. Kolhmann (Costa Rica), First and Second Vice-Chairmen respectively; and C. Jaber (Mexico), Rapporteur; A. Barros de Melo (Brazil) and S. Moreau (Bolivia) were elected Chairman and Rapporteur respectively of Working Group 1; and M. Machado (Argentina) and M. C. Pineda de Carias (Honduras) of Working Group 2. The Conference also established an open-ended drafting group to draw up the text of the declaration of Concepción.

19. The representative of the United Nations made a presentation on the objectives and status of preparations for UNISPACE III. The presentation covered the status of the agreements as of June 1998 of the Advisory and Preparatory Committees for UNISPACE III, in particular those of relevance to the preparatory conferences.

20. The Governments of countries from the Latin America and Caribbean region made statements indicating their views on the objectives of UNISPACE III, emphasizing the importance of the participation of countries of the region in that Conference and reaffirming that international cooperation in

space activities was a basic tool for achieving the sustainable development of the countries of the region.

21. Space agencies and institutions of the region with space activities also made presentations. Those presentations highlighted specific ongoing programmes being carried out by those entities and other activities that were being planned for the future. Many of the activities presented had international or regional cooperation elements.

22. Invited presentations were also made in plenary meetings by space agencies from outside the region. Those presentations highlighted some of the global and regional issues and identified a number of ongoing international and regional programmes or projects in areas of space science research and applications, as well as possible ways in which countries of the region who were not involved yet could participate in them.

23. Special presentations were made in plenary meetings by the secretariat of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites on the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) partnership, which would involve the major systems for global observations (space- and ground-based) to increase the scientific understanding of Earth's environment as well as to provide support for disaster management; by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics on the commercial space exhibition that will be mounted during UNISPACE III; and by a former student of the International Space University on the status of preparations for the Space Generation Forum, an event of the Technical Forum of UNISPACE III aimed at bringing the perspectives of university-level students and young space-related professionals to bear on what the future of space activities could be. The presentation of the issues to be dealt with by UNISPACE III was complemented by a round-table discussion of certain concerns of relevance for the participation of industry in space activities.

24. Following the plenary meetings, the Preparatory Conference conducted its work through two working groups, which, through technical presentations and discussions, identified issues relating to the environment and natural resources as well as to disaster management (Working Group 1) and to satellite communications, micro- and mini-satellites, basic space science and space-related education (Working Group 2). In each working group, speakers nominated by Governments of the participating Member States and from space-related institutions from within and outside the region made technical presentations on the items of primary interest to the region. Presentations made by speakers from the region included proposals of possible recommendations to be made by the Preparatory Conference. At the conclusion of all the presentations, the working groups conducted discussions on those proposals.

25. At its last plenary meeting, the Preparatory Conference adopted the Concepción Declaration (A/C.4/53/8, annex), which provided an overall policy framework for the recommendations of the Conference.

26. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean expressed their appreciation to the Government of Chile for organizing and hosting the Preparatory Conference.

II. Recommendations of the Preparatory Conference

27. The Regional Preparatory Conference for UNISPACE III for Latin America and the Caribbean took note of the excellent work done by the working groups in identifying particular areas of priority interest for the countries of the region in various fields of space activity. On the basis of the results of the deliberations in both working groups, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean submit the following recommendations to the Advisory Committee.

A. Recommendations related to regional interests and concerns

28. It was recommended that action be taken:

(a) To create and/or strengthen governmental institutional mechanisms for ensuring the satisfactory development of space activities and to promote the participation of all interested sectors, thus fostering cooperation with a view to contributing effectively to resolving socio-economic problems in Latin America and the Caribbean;

(b) To enhance, through regional, interregional and international cooperation mechanisms, the capacities of countries in the region by means of training in the field of space science and its applications in environmental management, within a balanced social and economic setting;

(c) To identify and establish, through the competent national authorities, focal points for the exchange of information and dissemination of the results of regional and interregional projects, in the areas of environmental studies, natural resources and disaster management, in which the various sectors of society concerned with such issues participated;

(d) To foster the creation of multidisciplinary committees that would promote education across the entire spectrum of space sciences in primary schools, secondary schools and universities and to generate training and research opportunities, in particular for professionals in remote areas;

(e) To identify potential sources of funding and international financing bodies to provide support with a view to including space science and technology in academic curricula at the different educational levels;

(f) To encourage, with the assistance, *inter alia*, of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, the participation of professionals from the region in international research and development programmes;

(g) To foster the use and integration of space data and other information within the programmes and activities of public institutions in countries in the region, for the purpose of publicizing technological advances, with emphasis on the fields of satellite communications and micro-satellites;

(h) To promote the production of risk-microzoning maps (microseismicity, hydrometeorology, urban and rural pollution, interferometry etc.) through access to and use of satellite imaging and geographic information systems;

(i) To encourage and support regional and interregional coordination in the field of education with a view to permitting the development of and access to applications of space science and technology, thus permitting the exchange of teaching materials and experience within the field of education, including distance learning programmes, for the benefit of all sectors of society;

(j) To promote the participation of countries in the region in education projects with a space-related component, such as education workshops within the scope of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), and to promote the organization of other regional workshops within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

B. Recommendations related to global interests

29. It was recommended that action be taken:

(a) To give priority to specific cooperation projects in the field of space that would make an effective contribution to developing the potential of States in terms of human, technological, economic and training resources, in the interests of achieving the best possible results;

(b) To facilitate the timely and effective use of the information obtained through space technology as a basic input into the decision-making process, in the public sector and in the private sector;

(c) To increase the interlinking of telecommunications, remote sensing and space information systems in order to maximize the effectiveness of initiatives directed towards the sustainable development of States;

(d) To establish, during the decade 2000-2010, a comprehensive strategy for the use of space technology for risk evaluation and for prevention, mitigation and reduction activities in disaster management;

(e) To promote the use of space technology for the purpose of achieving a global understanding of climatic phenomena, such as El Niño events, and of taking appropriate preventive measures.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 20* (A/52/20), para. 153.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I and Vol. I/Corr.1, Vol. II, Vol. III and Vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution I, annex II.

Annex

Programme of the Regional Preparatory Conference on the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for Latin America and the Caribbean

Date/time	*Subject*
Monday, 12 October 1998	
a.m.	Registration
	Plenary
	Opening ceremony
p.m.	Presentation on UNISPACE III
	Statements by Governments
Tuesday, 13 October 1998	
a.m.	**Plenary**
	Presentations by countries of the region
p.m.	Special presentations
	Space agencies
	Integrated Global Observing Strategy
	Space Exhibition
	Space Generation Forum
	Invited personalities
Wednesday, 14 October 1998	
	Working Group 1
	Environment and natural resources
0900-1030	Technical presentations
1100-1200	Technical presentations
1200-1300	Discussion of issues
1400-1530	Technical presentations
1600-1730	Technical presentations
1730-1830	Discussion of issues

Date/time	*Subject*
	Working Group 2
	Communications
0900-1030	Technical presentations
1100-1200	Technical presentations
1200-1300	Discussion of issues
	Micro- and mini-satellites **Basic space sciences**
1400-1530	Technical presentations
1600-1730	Technical presentations
1730-1830	Discussion of issues

Thursday, 15 October 1998

	Working Group 1
	Application to disaster management
0900-1030	Technical presentations
1100-1200	Technical presentations
1200-1300	Discussion of issues
	Other UNISPACE III items
1400-1530	Technical presentations
1600-1730	Technical presentations
1730-1830	Discussion of issues
	Working Group 2
	Other UNISPACE III items
0900-1030	Technical presentations
1100-1200	Technical presentations
1200-1300	Discussion of issues
	Education
1400-1530	Technical presentations
1600-1730	Technical presentations
1730-1830	Discussion of issues

Date/time	*Subject*
Friday, 16 October 1998	
	Working Group of the Whole
a.m.	International cooperation
	Plenary
p.m.	Adoption of the Concepción Declaration and of the recommendations of the Regional Preparatory Conference